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ABSTRACT

College and university instructors need to utilize selected principles of learning from the psychology of education. These principles of learning when implemented in the classroom should assist each student to achieve goals more optimally. The five principles of learning recommended to facilitate student progress in the higher education curriculum are: provide meaningful content to students; obtain student interest in learning; guide learners to perceive purpose in goal attainment; make provisions for individual differences; and assist students to develop quality attitudes. The four philosophies of teaching emphasized are: a subject centered curriculum; problem solving procedures; measurably stated objectives; and decision making strategies. It is suggested that increased emphasis be placed upon students identifying and solving vital problems pertaining to inherent course work with instructor guidance. Decision-making strategies could increasingly reflect a problem solving approach. Subject centered approaches might well stress the acquisition of content by students to solve problems. Contains 10 references. (SM)

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TEACHING ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL

Marlow Ediger

College/university instructors need to utilize selected principles of learning from the psychology of education. These principles of learning when implemented in the classroom should assist each student to achieve more optimally. Which principles of learning should then be emphasized?

The Psychology of Education and the Instructional Arena

College/university instructors need to provide meaningful learning opportunities to students. Content presented must make sense to the student. The learner should definitely understand subject matter taught. If students do not attach meaning to what is being presented, rote learning may accrue. Rote learning may be pursued by the student to do well on a test. However, meaningless content is difficult to remember. Retention of what has been taught and learned is vital.

To guide students to attach meaning to subject matter presented, the college/university instructor should

1. provide an adequate number of examples pertaining to a concept or generalization being stressed in the classroom setting.

2. present subject matter clearly, concisely, and at a rate conducive to adequate comprehension by the student.

3. use audio-visual materials to clarify specifics, terms, and main ideas.

4. emphasize depth teaching rather than survey approaches.

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5. present content sequentially so that students perceive a definite order of subject matter taught.

A second principle of learning from the psychology of education advocates college/university instructors securing the interests of students. If students are interested in an ongoing presentation, they attend to facts, concepts, and generalizations being presented. The learner and the curriculum become one and not separate entities. Securing the interests of students means to obtain and hold their attention.

Students fail to attend class due to a lack of interest in ongoing lectures and discussions. With a lack of interest, the student is not able to concentrate or reflect upon ideas presented by the instructor. To secure and maintain student interest in learning, the instructor should

1. utilize proper stress, pitch, and juncture (intonation) in presenting content orally.

2. maintain eye-contact with learners. Communication is aided as audience contact is in evidence between instructor and students.

3. identify stimulating questions to discuss with learners.

4. reveal enthusiasm for teaching on the higher education level.

5. have excellent rapport with each learner.

Instructors need to assist students to perceive purpose in ongoing lectures and discussions. If students fail to perceive purpose in learning, they do not accept reasons for acquiring subject matter. Perceiving purpose or reasons for learning represent powerful factors in stimulating students to achieve and progress.

To assist college/university students to perceive purpose in learning, the instructor could

1. state reasons as to the relevance to students for acquiring selected facts, concepts, and generalizations.

2. discuss with learners reasons for the latter acquiring vital subject matter content.

3. announce test dates well ahead of time to have learners perceive purpose and effort in reviewing content. The purpose here being to receive an excellent grade on the test.

4. reward students for responding well to questions raised in class. Verbal rewards as well as nonverbal approaches may work effectively to develop learner perceived purpose.

5. use exhortation at selected intervals to guide learners to perceive purpose in learning.

The college/university instructor needs to provide for individual differences among students. Students differ from each other in many ways such as interests, purposes, meanings, capacity, and effort put forth in the academic arena. It behooves the instructor to make selected provisions for individual differences. To provide for these differences, students with instructor guidance could

1. select their own topic for a written report.

2. choose the title of an oral presentation in the classroom setting.

3. select the committee to work on in solving a relevant problem identified in class.

4. permit students to state what they would like to discuss within an ongoing presentation.

5. take time to have student input in terms of questions/comments in taking a future test.

Each of the above enumerated items emphasizes content directly related to the course title and related items taught by the instructor. Each student should develop a project for the class dealing with personal needs. The term project is evaluated in terms of quality, specific criteria.

The college/university instructor needs to emphasize quality attitudes be developed by students in the academic curriculum. Positive feelings, values, and beliefs assist students to achieve more optimally in the academic dimension. Negative attitudes hinder in self concept development and achievement in life in general. To assist students to develop effectively in the attitudinal domain, the college/university instructor needs to

1. respect questions raised and answers given by students in the classroom setting.

2. attempt to call students by name. Large numbers in a class may prohibit using this criterion.

3. utilize a variety of activities in teaching such as lectures, discussions, video-tapes, films, filmstrips, and slides to achieve objectives.

4. make content/subject matter meaningful and understandable.

5. accept students as human beings having much worth.

Philosophy of Teaching

Diverse philosophies may be emphasized by the college/university instructor in teaching students.

First of all, a subject centered curriculum may be in the offing. To emphasize a subject centered curriculum, the instructor must emphasize vital facts, concepts, and generalizations. The basics in the curriculum are to be taught to students. These basics stress essential content for all students to acquire.

Mental development becomes a major objective of instruction. Mind is real and needs optimal development. Abstract content for student acquisition is to be preferred above that of the semi-concrete and the concrete. Stimulating subject matter presented by a well prepared, academically inclined instructor assists learners to develop well intellectually. Quality attitudes are stressed for student attainment as they assist in intellectual and mental development.

Evaluation of student progress in a course emphasizes the amount of vital subject matter acquired.

A second philosophy of teaching stresses a problem solving procedure. Here, the instructor guides students to identify vital problems. Subject matter learned byu students is instrumental to the solving of problems. Subject matter then is not an end in and of itself, but rather provides data or information to the solving of problems.

After adequate data has been acquired, a hypothesis or tentative answer to the problem follows. The hypothesis is not an absolute, but subject to testing. A variety of reference sources such as the concrete, semi-concrete, and the abstract are utilized as materials to

acquire information to test the hypothesis. After adequate testing, the hypothesis may be accepted as is, modified, or refuted.

The instructor on the college/university needs to encourage problem solving on the part of students. Problems selected need to be respected by both students and the instructor. Quality and clarity of problem identification is important. Adequate reference sources need to be available to gather data directly related to the problem, as well as to test the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the hypothesis.

A third philosophy of teaching emphasizes the use of precise, measurably stated objectives. The instructor teaches students so that the latter attain the precise ends. The lectures, discussions, and other learning activities are aligned to the objectives. Thus, the instructor teaches toward the measurably stated objectives which are there for student achievement. Either a student does or does not attain a precise end. Measurement procedures are aligned to the sequential objectives. High validity in measuring student achievement should then be in evidence.

Those objectives not attained by a student require a different teaching strategy. A logical curriculum is involved when the college/university instructor arranges the measurably stated objectives sequentially for learners to attain.

A fourth philosophy of teaching stresses decision-making skills by students be sharpened. Here, the student is heavily involved in determining scope and sequence in the curriculum. After a few group sessions of a class, the instructor plans with each student what he/she would wish to learn. The college/university instructor may also plan

with a committee of students what the latter is to learn and the due date for the project. Heavy input from the student is wanted in determining objectives, learning activities, and appraisal procedures. The tasks chosen by students with instructor guidance may or may not emphasize problem solving activities. A psychological curriculum is in evidence when students individually or in a committee sequence their very own learning activities. A demanding, achievement orientated curriculum may well be in the offing when students with instructor guidance slect their own learning routes to achieve objectives. The objectives may be stated in measurable terms or they might be very open-ended, such as in general objectives. Positive attitudes toward learning might well be an end result when students heave a vital role in curricular decision-making procedures.

In Closing

Five principles of learning were discussed to facilitate student progress in the higher education curriculum. Thus, instructors should

1. provide meaningful content to students.
2. obtain student interest in learning.
3. guide learners to perceive purpose in goal attainment.
4. make provision for individual differences.
5. assist students to develop quality attitudes.

These principles of learning from the psychology of education should be followed regardless of the philosophy of teaching being stressed.

Four philosophies of teaching were emphasized:

1. a subject centered curriculum.
2. problem solving procedures.
3. measurably stated objectives.
4. decision-making strategies.

The writer recommends increased emphasis be placed upon students with instructor guidance identifying and solving vital problems pertaining to inherent course work. Decision-making strategies could increasingly reflect a problem solving approach. Subject centered approaches might well stress the acquisition of content by students to solve problems. Subject matter learned within the measurably stated objectives philosophy could also provide data to utilize in the solving of problems.

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